

Los Angeles Times

Best art of 2018: Jasper Johns, Renaissance nudes, 'Made in L.A.' and a sleeper hit at LACMA



2018 year in review for the arts.
(Michael Waraksa / For the Times)

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ART CRITIC

In chronological order of their opening, these were the 10 most engaging art museum exhibitions that I saw this year within L.A.'s immediate orbit. (Good news for the holiday break: Six of them are still on view.)

“Jasper Johns: Something Resembling Truth,” The Broad

A big survey, not a full retrospective, the show offered a deep, satisfying dive into how Jasper Johns’ work launched a compelling critique of pure abstraction in the 1950s and beyond, changing American art’s direction. Review. Feature. Performance review.



Installers mount “Three Flags” in preparation for the opening of “Jasper Johns: Something Resembling Truth” at the Broad museum in downtown L.A. (Allen J. Schaben / Los Angeles Times)

“Tony DeLap: A Retrospective,” Laguna Art Museum

By 1974, Tony DeLap was making eye-bending hybrids of paintings and sculptures, distinctive for their mix of craftsmanship and discerning wit. Review.



A square canvas intersects with a circular one in Tony DeLap's "Thauma II," 1986, acrylic, wood, canvas.
(Laguna Art Museum)

"Made in L.A. 2018," UCLA Hammer Museum

With a smart focus on a wide variety of recent art keenly attuned to the turbulence of our socially disturbed time — notably, two-thirds of the artists were women — this was the best Hammer biennial yet. Review



Eamon Ore-Giron's "Angelitos Negros (detail)," part of the Hammer's "Made in L.A." biennial.
(Christopher Knight / Los Angeles Times)

"The Chiaroscuro Woodcut in Renaissance Italy," Los Angeles County Museum of Art

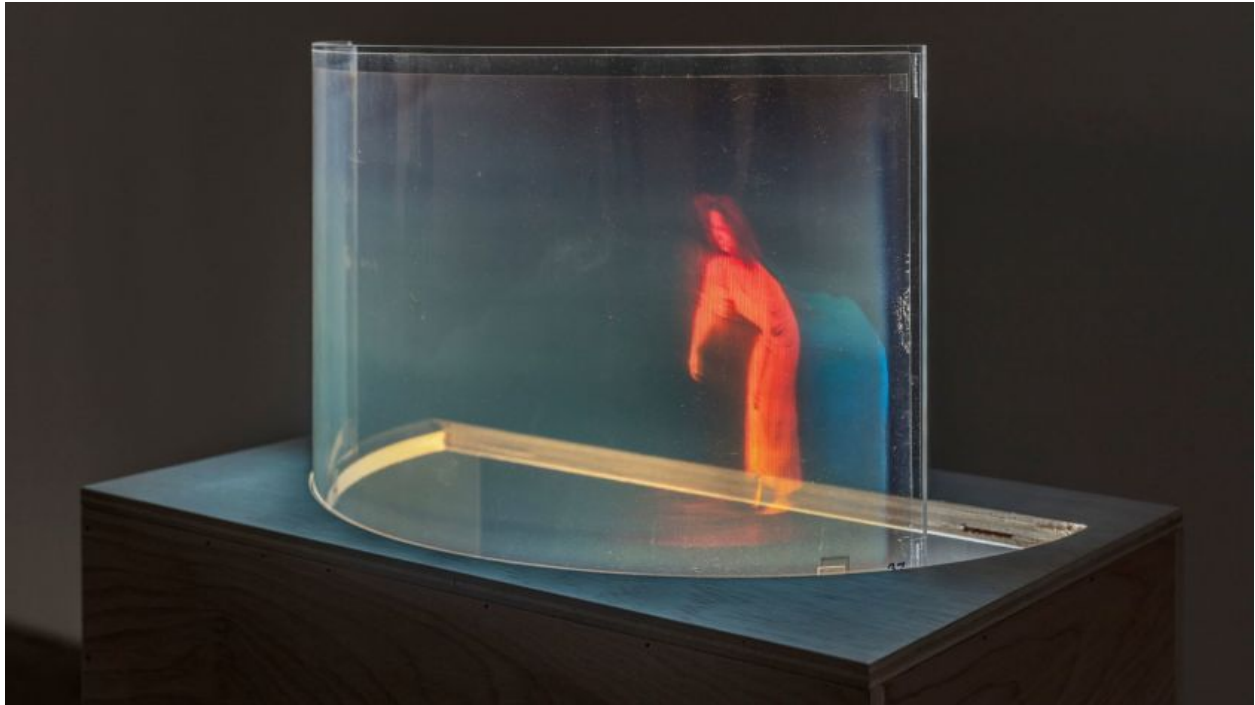
Sleeper hit of the year, this splendid, unprecedented array of 107 woodcuts showed how Italian Renaissance printmakers crafted an illusion of illumination emerging from the shadows as a metaphor for unfolding thought. Review.



Ugo da Carpi, "Hercules and the Nemean Lion," circa 1517-18, chiaroscuro woodcut from two blocks.
(Trustees of the British Museum / LACMA)

"3D: Double Vision," Los Angeles County Museum of Art

A provocative survey traces how, since the proliferation of camera images began in the mid-19th century, artists have grappled with the simple fact that physical depth is missing from a likeness found in any two-dimensional picture. (Continuing through March 31.) Review.



Simone Fori, "Striding Crawling," 1975-78, Integral Multiplex Hologram.
(Fredrik Nilsen)

"Striking Iron: The Art of African Blacksmiths," UCLA Fowler Museum

More than 225 remarkable iron objects crafted in Africa, mostly in the 19th and early 20th centuries, embody power as a trait of human knowledge and facility rather than merely physical might. (The show ends Dec. 30.) Review.

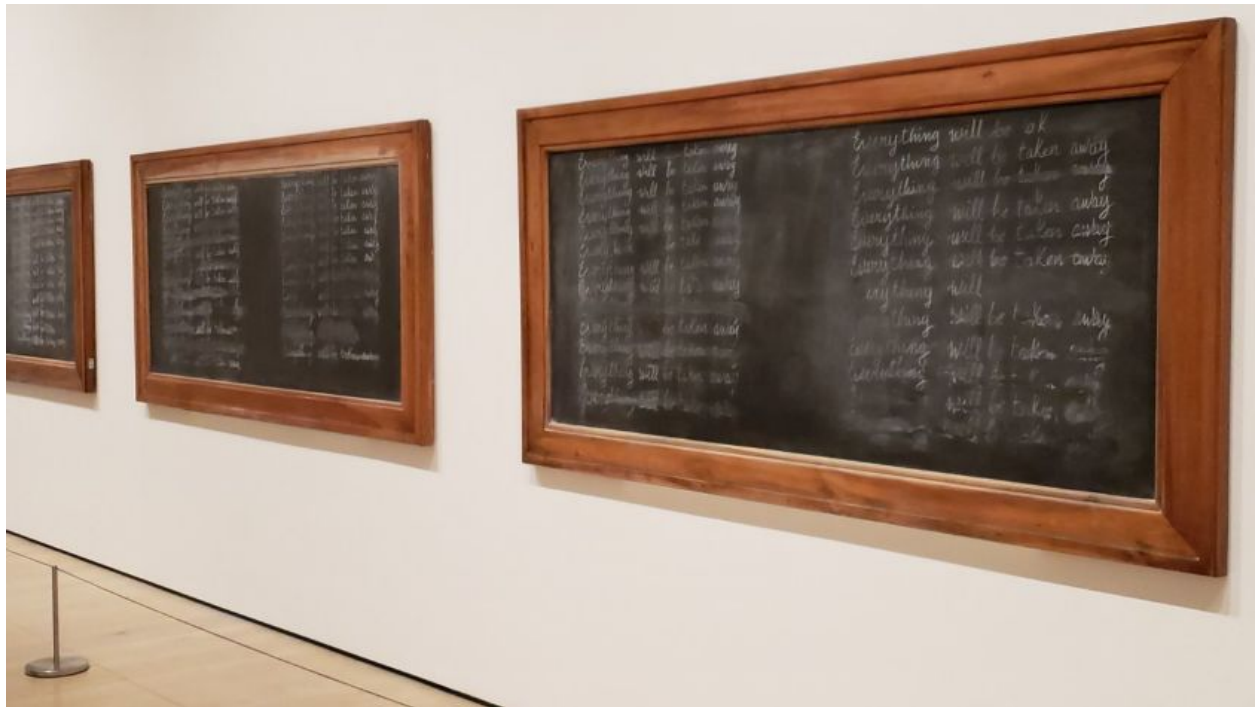
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Installation view of furnace bellows and forged iron objects in “Striking Iron: The Art of African Blacksmiths.”
(UCLA Fowler Museum)

“Adrian Piper: Concepts and Intuitions, 1965-2016,” UCLA Hammer Museum

A big retrospective of the Berlin-based American Conceptual and performance artist ricochets between her enthusiasm for soulful popular culture (psychedelia, funk music) and academic philosophy (Immanuel Kant, David Hume), building on the powerful precedent of artist Sol LeWitt. (The show continues through Jan. 6.) Review.



“Everything #21 (detail),” 2010-2013, chalk on vintage blackboards. It’s part of “Adrian Piper: Concepts and Intuitions, 1965-2016” at the UCLA Hammer Museum (UCLA Hammer Museum)

“One Day at a Time: Manny Farber and Termite Art,” Museum of Contemporary Art

Full of surprises, this wide-ranging group exhibition is keyed to San Diego-based artist Manny Farber (1917-2008). His paintings, like his influential film criticism, value unexpected, down-to-earth, rigorous points of view over grandiosity and flash. (The show is on view through March 11.) Review.



Manny Farber, "Domestic Movies," 1985, oil on board.
(MOCA)

"The Renaissance Nude," J. Paul Getty Museum

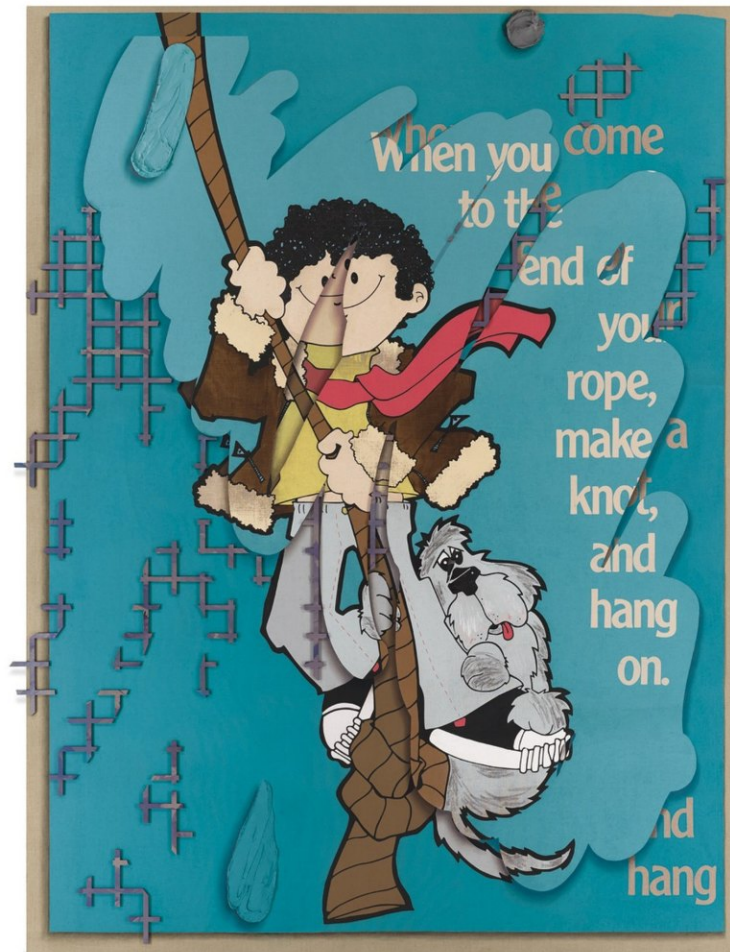
A fascinating look at how — and why — naked male and female bodies emerged as an artistic staple during the European Renaissance, this is the dazzling kind of art historical exhibition that only the Getty seems to do. (Catch it before it closes Jan. 27.) Review.



Titian, "Venus Rising From the Sea," about 1520; oil on canvas.
(J. Paul Getty Museum)

"Laura Owens," Museum of Contemporary Art

An entrancing midcareer survey of the L.A.-based painter lays out her pictorially savvy way with unexpected imagery, gathered from sources as far-flung as mainstream European art history, children's books, greeting-card racks at the drugstore, traditional Chinese scroll-painting, wallpaper and — of course — the internet. (The show remains on view through March 25.) Review.



Laura Owens, "Untitled," 2014, mixed media.
(MOCA)

Honorable mentions

"Olafur Eliasson: Reality Projector," Marciano Art Foundation. Review. Feature.

"Harald Szeemann: Museum of Obsessions," Getty Research Institute and Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. Review.

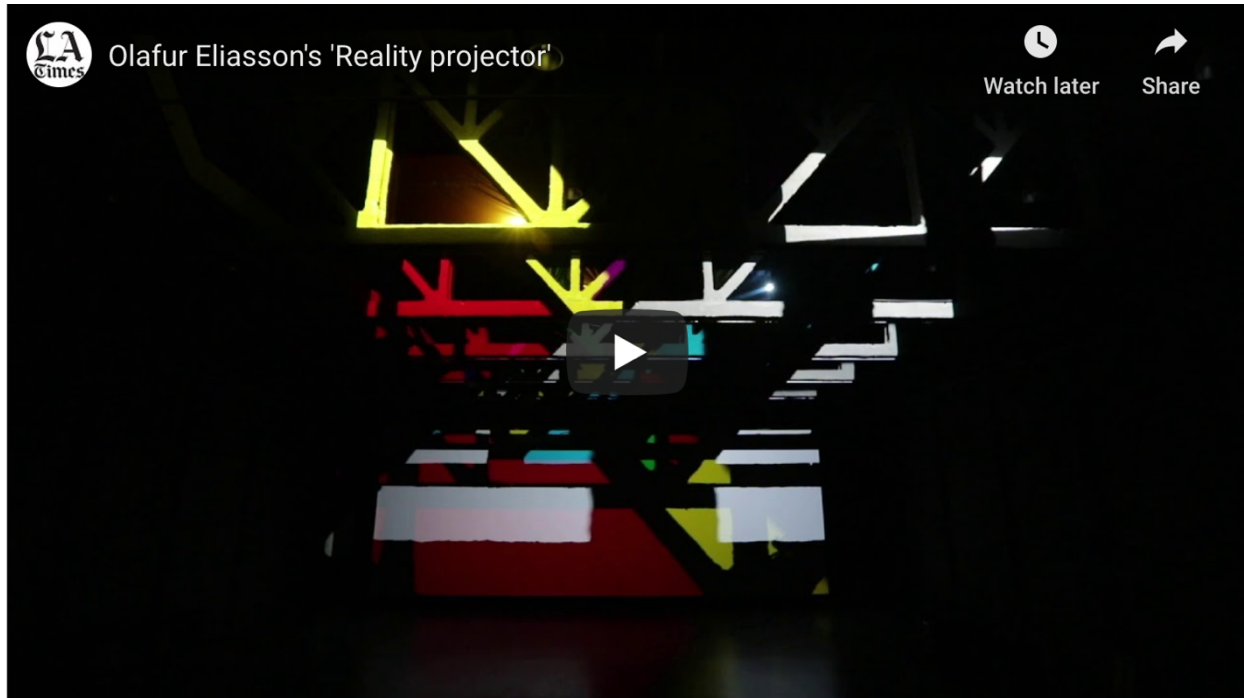
"King Tut: Treasures of the Golden Pharaoh," California Science Center. Review. Feature.

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“Robert Pruitt: Devotion,” California African American Museum.

“Stones to Stains: The Drawings of Victor Hugo,” UCLA Hammer Museum. Review.



The artist Olafur Eliasson, best known in this country for his 2008 installation of giant waterfalls in New York Harbor, has a new L.A. installation: a film-themed light artwork called “Reality projector” at the Marciano Art Foundation.

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